

December 14, 2025; Third Sunday in Advent  
Minnesota Valley Church  
Prelude: Carol Gustafson

**EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US**  
**SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**  
Sunday, December 14, 2025  
Minnesota Valley Church

Welcome & Prayer: Pastor Olson  
**Congregational Hymn #334 (vss. 1-3)**  
*O Come, Little Children*

Reading: Luke 2:1, 3, 4-7, Mary & Joseph  
Solo: "Holy is His Name" Mary  
Reading: Luke 2:8-14, The Angels  
Reading: Luke 2:15-16, The Shepherds  
Reading: Matthew 2:1, 2, 9-10, The Magi  
An Encouraging Word: Jacob O'Flanagan

Sunday School Songs:  
*Emmanuel*  
*Away in a Manger*  
*"C" is for the Christ Child*

**Congregational Hymn #334 (vss. 4-6)**

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Joseph & Mary: Joel & Hannah Carrizales  
Angels: Faith & Abby Carrizales,  
Brenda Knauber  
Shepherds: Elijah Carrizales, Jacob O'Flanagan  
Magi: Phinehas Carrizales, Meagan Pedersen,  
Rose Stenberg  
Piano: Rebekah Olson  
Director: Sharon Olson



**READER: Glenn Gustafson**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Isaiah 35:3-10 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."*

*5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. 7 The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. 8 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. 9 No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, 10 and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.*

**GOSPEL LESSON:** *Matthew 3:1-12 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" 4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down*

*and thrown into the fire. 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

**READER:** Here ends the reading of God's Word.

**CONGREGATION SINGS:** God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

**THE LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE:** Today we light the 3<sup>rd</sup> Advent candle, the pink one, the JOY CANDLE. We move on from two weeks of repentance and preparation to two weeks of joyful expectation. That is why it is the happy color of pink. How appropriate it is today to celebrate the joy of another newborn baby Oliver Dean Kalstad. (Invite children forward to front row.)

**BAPTISM:** Oliver Dean Kalstad

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & SPECIAL MUSIC**

**PRAYER FOR OFFERING**

**PRAISE SONGS:** songs chosen by Carol

**SERMON TITLE: "PATIENTLY WAITING"**

**James 5:7-11; Pastor Tom Olson; December 14, 2025**

*Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

**PRESENTS:** One of the hardest parts of Christmas time is for children to wait to open the presents that are being put under the tree.

**PAIN:** People who suffer are also waiting to receive their new life in heaven as well as some relief now. I see so much suffering and it just grieves my heart. I urge people to wait patiently but I know

that waiting can be hard. Today we look at James five about PATIENTLY WAITING for the Lord. Whether you are waiting to open your presents, get relief from suffering or waiting for the return of Jesus, this is an important topic. First of all...

**I. WAITING WITH EXPECTATION: THE EXAMPLE OF THE FARMER**

*James 5:7-8 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*

**CENTURIES:** Christians have been waiting for Christ to return for two thousand years. Jesus obviously has His own definition of "I am coming SOON."

**MARRIAGE:** We are to wait WITH EXPECTATION. I have read that in the time of Jesus, a bride that was engaged to her future husband would wait at home for him to go prepare a place for them to live. Then he would return for her unexpectedly, without warning, sometimes in the middle of the night with a loud and triumphant procession of friends and a spine-tingling shout.

**PREPARE:** In the meantime, the bride-to-be prepared herself and anticipated him coming to consummate the marriage and begin a life together. Perhaps she sewed baby clothes and gathered household items they would need. She waited expectantly for her beloved.

**AFRICA:** James compares it to a farmer waiting for the seasonal ...the spring rains and the fall rains. Sharon taught in Liberia, West Africa for eleven years where they had predictable rainy seasons. If I remember right, they happened suddenly. It would be hot and dry for months and then suddenly the weather would change and the weeks of rain would come. People would wait for those rains to hit the dry ground and water their rice fields. It was a life and death hope and expectation that the rain would come.

GARDEN: He also tells us to be patient like a farmer waiting for his crops to GROW. I have learned that there is nothing I can do to make the crops of the garden grow once I have planted them. I can cultivate them and pull the weeds out but the growth is between the seed and God.

SEEDS: Jesus told us in the parable of “the sower and the seeds” to just keep planting the Word of God in people’s hearts and leave the growth up to the Father. He tells us to plant the Word everywhere, even in poor soil. A man called me the other day and said that his granddaughter loves to talk with him about the Lord and the Bible but she is living in a sinful, same sex relationship. He is frustrated that she doesn’t see it. I encouraged him to be glad she likes to hear about God’s Word and to just keep planting the good seed of God’s Word.

WITCHES: Recently our granddaughter gave a little Gideon New Testament to a girl that was focused on witches. Now she is praying for the girl to read that Bible. Miracles can happen. A pastor friend of mine in downtown Minneapolis at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church said that a witch has invited Jesus into her heart and it has transformed her life and blessed their church.

As we wait for Jesus to return, James encourages us to:

1. Be patient
2. Stand firm
3. Expect him any time.
4. Stay busy sharing the gospel

PATIENT: Be patient. Why? ***2 Peter 3:9 tells us why: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”***

FIRM: Stand firm. Why? Because our spiritual armor, Ephesians 6 that Dave Fischer taught us, the sword, the shield is useful as long as we are standing firm, facing the enemy head on. We don’t have armor on our backs. So WAIT WITH EXPECTATION.  
SECONDLY...

## II. WAITING WITH A RIGHT ATTITUDE: THE REALITY OF JUDGEMENT

***James 5:9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!***

WARNING: One thing that God strongly warns us against is grumbling against each other. I am guilty myself; I have done more than my share of grumbling about people. Have you been grumbling about someone lately?

TOXIC: Grumbling is a poison that is absolutely toxic. It steals away precious time and energy. It puts out the fire of productivity and progress. Grumbling can tear a group of people with potential apart. That is why James tells us that it is something God will judge sternly.

ALTERNATIVE: What is the alternative to grumbling? What energizes and unites us? What fills us with joy and good ideas and draws people into a life-changing relationship with the Lord? In Ephesians 5:4 the Apostle Paul goes into great detail and gives a list of several other destructive speech patterns such as obscenity, foolish talking and crude joking and then he gives the WHOLESOME ALTERNATIVE and says “...RATHER THE GIVING OF THANKS.” You have heard me say many times that I believe that THE GIVING OF THANKS IS OUR MOST POWERFUL SPIRITUAL WEAPON OF WARFARE.

PRAYERS: Ephesians six says that after we put on the full armor of God, we fight the powers of darkness with “ALL KINDS OF PRAYERS”, and first and foremost of those prayers is the giving of thanks.

***1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 “Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 GIVE THANKS in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire...”***

*Philippians 4:6 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”*

*Colossians 3:17 “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

The giving of thanks:

- Ignites the fire of the Holy Spirit in us.
- Takes away anxiety from us.
- Surrounds our activity with the blessing of God.

ALETTE: My childhood neighbor was a cheerful retired school teacher that we loved to visit. Whenever people asked her, “How are you?” she always replied, “I am thankful.” She was an inspiration to us. A thankful heart was a key to her joy.

QUESTION: As we are PATIENTLY WAITING for the return of Christ, we wait with THE RIGHT ATTITUDE, putting away grumbling and filling our hearts and minds with prayer of Thanksgiving. Finally...

### **III. WAITING WITH PERSEVERANCE: THE EXAMPLE OF JOB**

*James 5:10-11 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

PETERSON: There are many calamities in life that we face. On Friday I stopped by Joe Miller's garage in Apple Valley for a cup of coffee and to see how Heino was doing after the passing of his wife. There is a man named Peterson who drops by there for coffee with the guys. He has Parkinson's disease. I am not there

often so I was surprised to see how much he had deteriorated since I last saw him. He was suffering. He loves the Lord but still suffers, in spite of our fervent prayers for his healing.

ALL: We all suffer in many ways, physical, emotional, relational, financial... It is part of the sad realities of life in this world.

JOB: James is encouraging us here to SUFFER WITH PERSEVERANCE like the Job...the Old Testament example of extreme suffering. James reminds us that even though it may not feel like it, “God is compassionate and merciful.” But His timing of relief is not according to the schedule that we want. Perseverance in suffering is critical.

BRIDGET: I think I am right in saying that Bridget Bentin her suffering is replaced with full restoration in the presence of God. She was an artist and is in heaven experiences colors and beauty that even an artist could not imagine. Only God knows why the suffering was so long but I suspect that the greater the suffering, the greater the joy when it is over.

CHILDBIRTH: Megan Kalstad recently suffered the pain of childbirth but she also experienced the joy of holding her newborn baby...a joy that no husband or father alive will ever know because we did not carry that child nor suffer through the birth. It is a special joy known only to mothers.

JESUS: The Bible says that Jesus was willing to be nailed to the cross “for the joy set before him.” The suffering and agony of bearing our sins at Calvary is now replaced with saved souls coming to heaven one by one. Christ now has the joy of blessing them beyond imagination for all eternity. That is why God was willing to become a human baby, born in a stable, placed in a manger and then nailed to the cross where his holy and innocent blood atoned for our sins. He did it for the joy of having you and me with him forever.

So we WAIT PATIENTLY...

- WITH THE EXPECTATION OF A FARMER

- WITH THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE
- WITH THE PERSEVERENCE OF JOB

US: We wait for the moment that we are ushered into the glorious presence of God, robed in the righteousness of Christ where there is "fullness of joy and pleasures forever."

*That is why we celebrate Christmas. May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

**HYMN #2 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"**

**LORD'S PRAYER:** *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

**HYMN #19: Refrain only:** *O come, let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord. We'll give Him all the glory, we'll give Him all the glory, We'll give Him all the glory, Christ the Lord."*

**POSTLUDE:** Carol Gustafson